



# Stafford Public Schools

## Office of the Superintendent of Schools

16 Levinthal Run  
Stafford Springs, CT 06076  
Tel. 860.684.2208 · Fax 860.684.5172  
[www.stafford.k12.ct.us](http://www.stafford.k12.ct.us)

Steven A. Moccio  
*Superintendent of Schools*

To: CSDE Education Committee  
From: Steven A. Moccio, Superintendent of Schools  
Date: February 28, 2019  
Re: HB7150 – An Act Implementing The Governor's Budget Recommendations Concerning Education

The Town of Stafford is a rural community located in the northeast corner of Connecticut and encompasses 58.8 square miles. The Stafford Public School District currently enrolls approximately 1500 students within five schools buildings. The district maintains two primary schools (PreK – Grade 1), one elementary school (Grade 2 – 5), one middle school (Grade 6 – 8), and one high school (Grade 9 – 12). While district enrollment has dropped over the last several years, projections forecast a slight increase in future years.

I write in opposition of this bill due to its acceleration of Education Cost Sharing Grant reductions from the approved 10-year plan. The acceleration places extreme financial constraints during already difficult financial times and does not allow for adequate planning.

Every school district should reflect on current practice in order to find greater efficiencies. Should a statute be implemented, I suggest one that provides incentives, removes barriers, and minimizes unfunded mandates. The State of Connecticut Net Current Expenditure per Pupil (NCEP) amounts vary from \$12,899.45 to \$42,009.12. It should be noted that of the regional school districts operating in the State of Connecticut, only three (3) operate with a NCEP less than the Stafford Public Schools, with over half operating with a NCEP greater than the State of Connecticut average of \$18,762.

Rather than mandating a one-size fits all approach, I suggest rewriting the mandate to require districts operating a pre-determined percentage above the State of Connecticut NCEP to perform a feasibility study regarding regionalization. Local control would be maintained for those districts that are being fiscally responsible, while others would be required to shift current practice in an effort to reduce overall costs.

Included below are some key points and examples of how Stafford is meeting student need while maintaining a fiscally responsible budget. This is evidenced by Stafford's NCEP amount of \$17,086, which is less than the State of Connecticut NCEP average.

### **Shared Services**

Stafford Public Schools is a model for other districts as it works collaboratively with the Town of Stafford to employ shared staff in three (3) positions. Two of those positions are building maintainers while the third staff member serves as the school district's athletic director, as well as the town's director of parks and recreation. Cooperative arrangements exist for the school district's information technology staff to provide coverage to the town when necessary. An arrangement also exists for the school district to utilize the Town of Stafford's grant writer position.

Stafford Public Schools has a shared service arrangement with EASTCONN for residency/truancy services. The district also allows students from neighboring communities to pay tuition to attend a special education transition services program. Attempts have been made to fill open seats at our high school by revitalizing a previous designated high school arrangement with a neighboring school district.

#### **District Efficiencies**

At the January 14, 2019, meeting of the Stafford Board of Education, approval was provided to my office to begin a configuration study, which may result in the consolidation of the district's two primary schools. This information will be used to assist with planning, as the district continually works to improve student achievement and increase opportunities for all learners.

Stafford Public Schools and the Town of Stafford continually explores cooperative purchasing agreements and projects. Recent examples of projects include a geo-thermal heating system and a number of solar arrays which provide nearly 75% of the district's electricity.

The district health insurance is a self-funded program. Through vigilant monitoring and employee education, the program historically outperforms insurance agency projections. Through the district's efforts and vigilance, insurance costs to the Board of Education have not increased in the last few years, while neighboring districts are projecting double-digit increases.

Stafford Public Schools operates a self-supported food service program. The program continues to operate with no additional assistance or Board of Education funds necessary.

Thank you for your time and consideration of the Stafford Public Schools perspective on the consequences of this bill.